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Insanity; with Remarks.

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A CASE OF INEBRIETY WITH INSANITY; WITH REMARKS.*

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In October, 1885, Charles Watson, alias Jack Matthews, alias Frank Baker, was admitted to the Eastern Michigan Asylum. His history stated that about a week before, he had been found insane and irresponsible at South Lyon, a little village distant about twenty miles from Pontiac. He had extravagant delusions in reference to his ability to lay telephone and telegraph wires underneath the lakes in the immediate vicinity of the town where he was picked up. He was sent to the County Poor House at first, and afterwards, owing to a tendency to escape, was transferred to the County Jail. There he was restless and excited, and only quiet when engaged in writing out his scheme for telephone cables. He prepared plans and specifications covering several pages, and included most of the cities and towns east and west in his proposed lines. When brought to the institution he could give no account of himself, and his memory of recent and previous events seemed to be nearly abolished. He was constantly talking of his business affairs and his attention could hardly be gained long enough to secure any intelligible account of himself. Ten or twelve hours subsequent to admission his mind became clearer, and although confused and unnatural, he had some appreciation of his condition. The following day his mind was free from delusions, but slow and confused in its action. He made rapid improvement, and from this time until his discharge in the following January he had apparently no delusions. He gave, or pretended to give, some account of his career. Unfortunately, however, he was not frank, and failed to relate the most important part of his history. He detailed the circumstances of receiving a wound while in the regular army, and ascribed his present insanity to a traumatic cause. Incidentally he mentioned that he had been in the habit of drinking, and thought his susceptibility to intoxicants had been increased by the injury to his head. According to his story, in January, 1877, while in General Miles' division engaged in fighting Indians, he received a blow upon the head from some unknown missile. The blow was a glancing one, directed from above downward and forward, and he was struck upon

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the forehead at the edge of the hair. The external table of the skull was comminuted, and several small pieces of bone were extracted when his wound was dressed. He was then told that in all probability the internal table had received a similar injury. He remained in the hospital from January until May, and during most of the time was delirious. After this time he recovered so far as to complete his term of enlistment, and received an honorable discharge from the army in July, 1880. He gave an account of an attack of mental disease which he suffered while living in Chicago in the same year, followed by a train of symptoms similar to those experienced at this institution. He also said that he had suffered another attack during which he was treated at the Danvers Lunatic Hospital. He claimed that the present was a third attack. Facts subsequently learned however show that these statements were wholly misleading. On correspondence with Dr. Goldsmith, then Superintendent of the Lunatic Hospital at Danvers, I learned from him that he had been admitted to that Hospital in January, 1885, and discharged in May of the same year. He showed no evidence of insanity while at Danvers, but was detained for some time after his apparent recovery because of the history of occasional attacks of confusion and excitement without manifest cause or warning. There was also some difficulty in procuring his discharge because of obstacles in the way of his transfer to the State of his residence—Pennsylvania. The case presented some peculiar features to Dr. Goldsmith, because the patient absolutely denied alcoholic excesses until within a short time before leaving, when he acknowledged that he had been an inebriate, and that his mental troubles were to be ascribed to this circumstance. Acting upon this hint received from Dr. Goldsmith, as soon as the patient was able to work I placed him with the engineer, where for a number of weeks he did considerable useful labor. The term *soldiering* however aptly described his mode of work. He showed a fair acquaintance with his trade—that of a plumber, but consumed much time and lacked persistence and energy. Upon his discharge in the following January he was paid a fair compensation for what he had done. He had sufficient means to go to Cleveland, Ohio, where he claimed to have friends, and an opportunity to secure work. A few days subsequent to his discharge, a telephone message was received from the Chief of Police in Detroit, stating that he had been picked up again in that city in an insane condition, probably from drink. Under the circumstances, believing him to be a drunken

vagabond, I declined to receive him again. I learned subsequently that he was transferred for a short time to the County Asylum at Wayne, but heard nothing more of him until May, 1888, when he was brought to the asylum under the name of Frank Baker. He had been picked up in the streets of Mt. Clemens, Mich., about a week before. At that time he was wandering half-clad about the streets, on his way "to the North Pole," and had delusions about being a soldier. He was confused and under the influence of fixed delusions. His speech was tremulous, and something about him suggested the presence of general paresis. No facts whatever could be learned about him. When he reached the asylum he was immediately recognized as the patient discharged upwards of three years before under the name of Charles Watson. At first he could not recall anything about the asylum, but in the course of a few hours a confused remembrance of places and associates came back to him. He recalled some names, and when passing through the basement to be weighed, remembered that he had assisted in running steam and water pipes in the institution. Within a few days his mind became clear, and he volunteered to give an account of himself, which he did subsequently in a voluminous manuscript. The statements contained in this manuscript I believe to be substantially correct, as I have verified many of them by correspondence with other asylums. I regret that its length will permit little more than a summary, as it is interesting from many points of view. He writes frankly, and makes no effort to extenuate his faults. Like most inebriates, in fact, he shows a fatal facility for confessing his direlctions from the path of duty.

He writes that after his discharge from the army in 1880 he went to Chicago and began to work at his trade, securing \$2.50 per day, steady work and a permanent situation, but soon became unsteady in his habits and was arrested and sent to the Detention Hospital, when after a trial before the county judge he was sent to the Washingtonian Home. There he remained three months and had to attend lectures twice a day, hearing sermons on intemperance. He says, "I resolved, God helping me, I never would drink any more." And very properly adds: "Alas! how long did it last?" He next went on the Great Lakes as second engineer on a propeller, but became intoxicated in Milwaukee, and the boat sailed away and left him. After sobering off he enlisted in the United States Army to get a chance to stop drinking by being sent to Ft. Walla Walla, W. T., but unfortunately for his good

intentions, he was sent to Columbus, Ohio, where after his first pay day he drank up all his money. When picked up by the police and sent to the U. S. Barracks he was found to be suffering from acute mental disturbance, and required careful medical attendance for several days. When he came to himself he found that the attending physicians had recommended his discharge from the army, and he was accordingly soon after discharged "never to be enlisted again." He then came to Detroit, where his drinking habits soon transferred him to the Wayne county asylum in a state of active insanity. Upon his discharge from Wayne he went to Chicago, and had only worked a month when he fell again and was sent to the House of Detention connected with the county jail. Upon examination it was found that he was not a resident of Chicago, and he was furnished transportation by the county agent to St. Louis, why to St. Louis does not appear. It seems to have been a favorite method of shifting the responsibility of his care to send him from one city to another, and it will be found in his subsequent history that he thus traveled annually many hundred miles at public expense. In St. Louis he secured a good situation and worked five months without relapsing into his old habits. He then went upon a spree, drank up all his savings, and required to be sent to the county asylum, under Dr. C. W. Stevens, for seven weeks, when he was discharged under a promise to leave the city. In compliance with this promise he visited Little Rock, Hot Springs and Cairo, but finally procured a situation in Indianapolis, where he worked without drinking for some time. Unfortunately, before many weeks he went to Shelbyville on an excursion, became intoxicated and, to use his own expression, was "landed in jail crazy," whence he was sent to the Indiana State Hospital, under the care of Dr. Fletcher. Here he remained three months, and was sent upon his discharge to Dayton, Ohio, where after working fourteen weeks he again became intoxicated and was sent before the probate judge, who ordered his confinement in the Dayton Asylum. Owing to the over-crowding of this asylum he was not received, but was sent to the county jail instead, and his condition improving, he was soon after discharged on a promise that he would leave town and relinquish drinking. He went accordingly to Cincinnati, where he worked steadily for good wages for about two months, but again yielded to drink and was arrested, sent to the hospital to recuperate, and finally ordered to leave town. Here in his manuscript he remarks very appropriately as doubtless many others had remarked before him, "I thought

what good am I—a disgrace to my people and friends—a drunken vagabond roaming about the United States.” Through the kind offices of a friend he was furnished at this time transportation to his home in Philadelphia, where he was received by his relatives with open arms, and went to work, determined to turn over a new leaf. For a time he was “really happy,” as he says, but the appetite for drink soon took hold of him again, and he lost his situation. He was placed in the Pennsylvania hospital for one month, and when discharged his feeling of disgrace was such that he did not return to his friends, but went to Wilmington, Delaware. Here, to drown thoughts of his home, he soon became intoxicated, was arrested, lodged in jail, pronounced insane and sent to the county asylum for the insane, there being no State institution in Delaware. This county asylum, to use his own expression, was “not up to the handle,” and he was glad to leave it in the course of three weeks, when he went to Baltimore. Here he resumed his habits of dissipation and was soon picked up by the police. Afterwards he went through the usual formality, and was committed to Mt. Hope Retreat, but was soon transferred to Bay View, where he remained about ten days. The arrangements of this place do not seem to have been satisfactory to him. He says the food was very poor, the coffee being without sugar and the bread without butter, the time of rising being at daylight and the hour of retiring twenty minutes after supper. Ten days’ treatment at this asylum being all he thought he required, he arranged to leave the city, provided he was discharged and was allowed to go. He next obtained work in Buffalo, N. Y., where he remained a month, and afterwards was sent to Syracuse to do some work, but resuming his habits of drinking, was sent to the Oneida county asylum at Rome. Soon after, Dr. C. S. Hoyt, the secretary of the New York State Board of Charities, under a promise that he would stop drinking and go to work, gave him a ticket to New York. He obtained employment in New York and worked a week, when he resumed drinking and was sent to the insane pavilion of Bellevue hospital. Afterwards—just how he does not state—he was transferred to the Flatbush asylum, where he was soon found by Dr. Hoyt, who furnished him transportation to Chicago, where he arrived after a spree and various adventures at Niagara Falls. In Chicago he worked well for some time, but finally resumed habits of drinking and was committed for a third time to the Detention hospital and transferred to the county asylum and remained six weeks. He then went to Kenosha, Wis., where he soon lost his situation through drink, was

arrested and ordered sent to an asylum, but it appearing that he was an alcoholic case, he was discharged from custody and ordered out of the State. He next appeared at Pullman, Ills., where he became intoxicated after the first pay day, and when he came to himself he found that he was in jail at Kankakee. A jury trial before a county judge followed, and he was found by the intelligent jury to be "insane at periodical times, but not a dangerous man to be at large." The judge however rather inconsistently thought he ought to leave the State, and directed that transportation to Louisville, Ky., be furnished him. In Louisville the old scenes were repeated, and he was sent to the asylum at Anchorage, where he remained three weeks, and was discharged on condition that he would leave the State. He went to Cincinnati and worked soberly for three months, and then fell and was sent to the Longview asylum, where he remained thirty days. Upon his discharge he was furnished transportation to Boston. In Boston he earned good wages for a time, but finally succumbed to what he terms "Hanover street beer and barrel houses," and was sent to Danvers upon the certificates of Drs. Jelly and Harding. He remained in Danvers under the care of Dr. Goldsmith for five months and was then sent to Chicago by Frank B. Sanborn, Esq., then Inspector of Charities. He stopped in Detroit, however, and in a short time required to be sent to the Wayne County Asylum under the care of Dr. Bennett, where he remained two weeks. Upon his discharge he resumed his journey to Chicago, and before many months was once more in the Cook County Asylum. After three months he was discharged and went to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he fell in with a philanthropist who took him to his own house and did all in his power for his restoration. The good man's hospitality however was sadly abused. To use his own expression he "got drunk and was railroaded over to Lima, Ohio." He remained there but a short time, and on his way to Indianapolis was arrested at Rushville as an insane man, but soon afterwards was permitted to go. He next visited Indianapolis and afterwards Detroit, and from the latter city made the excursion to South Lyon mentioned in the early part of this paper. Upon his discharge from Pontiac he stopped in Detroit on his way to Cleveland, and becoming drunk, was sent out to Wayne once more, where he remained about three weeks, and then went to Cleveland, Ohio. There he soon went through the usual formalities, but the county judge thought he would not need to go to the asylum, and he was permitted to go on condition that he would leave the city, which he did.

He next appeared at Toledo where he worked fourteen days, and afterwards was picked up by the police in an intoxicated condition with active delusions about electricity, Indians, etc. A few days' residence in jail sufficed to restore him sufficiently to leave town. He went to Findlay, Ohio, where he soon resumed drinking habits and was sent to the county infirmary, where he remained two weeks, and was discharged and ordered out of the county. His next stopping place was Dayton, Ohio, where he soon required to be sent to the jail for ten days to sober up, and was afterwards ordered to leave town. He afterwards spent some time at the Miami County Infirmary, and upon his discharge went to Indianapolis, where he was soon arrested, locked up for safe-keeping until sober, and then sent out of the city. His next place of residence was Terre Haute, where he worked steadily for five weeks, and then celebrated the Fourth of July with such enthusiasm that he found himself when he awoke, in Marshall, Illinois, in confinement, where after a jury trial he was found insane and sent to the Illinois Southern Hospital at Anna, under Dr. Wardner. He remained there several months and finally received wages. When discharged he promised faithfully never to take liquor again. He went to St. Louis and kept sober for a week, when he fell and was sent to the county asylum, where he remained for three weeks, and upon his discharge was shipped to Chicago—presumably as an act of reciprocity. In Chicago he kept sober for three months and for the first time in many years accumulated money enough to bear the expenses of a journey to Boston. After a week in Boston he again yielded to temptation and was sent upon the certificates of Drs. Jelly and Harding to the Westborough Hospital for the Insane. After he had been there several weeks, his former acquaintance, Inspector Sanborn, visited the hospital, recognized him and arranged for his transportation to Chicago as soon as he was discharged, which occurred at the end of three months. In Chicago he remained sober and worked steadily for some time, but unfortunately went to Burlington, Iowa—the latter a prohibition State—and after about three weeks became insane from drink and was sent to the hospital at Mt. Pleasant, under the charge of Dr. Gilman. He remained at Mt. Pleasant several months and was finally discharged with sufficient money to defray his expenses to Chicago. There he remained five months without "drinking a drop," when he removed to Detroit and worked for about two weeks, when he went on a Sunday excursion to Toledo, where he became intoxicated and was locked up by the police.

He was retained in jail a few days and was afterwards sent back to Detroit, where he resumed drinking habits which brought him to the asylum at Pontiac the second time. His subsequent history at the asylum was not dissimilar to his former experiences. He was a pleasant, quiet and fairly industrious man, who had considerable appreciation of his condition and did not profess a virtue he did not feel. He spent several weeks at our summer camp upon Watkins' lake, and although it was possible for him to have procured liquor there, he was temperate and reliable. He improved so much mentally and physically that I could no longer retain him, and I arranged to send him to his relatives in Philadelphia, where he had a home prior to enlisting in the army. I never heard whether or not he arrived there. I fear I may see him again. If I do, what more can I do for him than I have done?

REMARKS.—The above case illustrates the futility of our present methods of dealing with the insane inebriate. Although it has been inevitable for eight years past that he will indulge in alcoholics to excess, and produce actual attacks of insanity whenever discharged, superintendents of asylums, as I myself have done on two occasions, have discharged this patient to go about from one asylum to another to increase the statistics of insanity and to burden public charity. Current methods of treatment have been tried thoroughly with him—the Washingtonian House with its lectures on the evils of intemperance, the asylum with its methods adapted wholly to the treatment of inebriety as a disease of the nervous system, the county asylum and infirmary, with the idea that the position of such a man should be made so uncomfortable he will not tarry, the jail as a place of punishment, and the like. The hopelessness of the task of reformation is well shown by the fact that he has thus enjoyed the hospitality of seven State asylums, one of them twice, three municipal asylums, one corporate asylum, five county asylums, in two of them each three times and in one twice, and in infirmaries and hospitals too numerous to mention. Friends also have made an effort for his restoration, and philanthropists have done their full duty, but with no greater success. Army service, even, the last reformatory expedient for the vicious, has proven a disastrous failure, and the question what is to be done with him still remains unanswered. It is certainly time to put an end to the present unsystematic and unsatisfactory method of dealing with him. There seems little or no prospect that asylum treatment, however prolonged, will prove

of any service. His period of abstinence from alcoholics seemed to have no relation to the length of time he had been under treatment. In some instances he fell the next day or week or month after leaving an asylum, and the period of abstinence bore little or no relation to his physical health. All this lends countenance to the theory that his desire for drink was not due to any special physical weakness or physical or mental depression. The sound of the glasses, he confesses, on several occasions had a peculiar charm for him, and he yielded to temptation because he heard their cheerful clink when he was walking the streets. There was also little mental impairment after he had recovered from the active delusions which followed his debauch. He was a good workman and generally gave satisfaction wherever he went. Almost the only symptom of mental impairment was a tendency to wander about. He changed his residence frequently. This however was not apparent when he was in an asylum. He displayed in fact too little restlessness, and seemed too well contented. His irresponsibility and inability to care for himself must be apparent to all who have followed the above history. Society owes it to itself to provide custodial care for such men, to the end that they may not destroy themselves by their excesses, or burden society by their improvidence. They should not fill up asylums, nor on the other hand should they be classed as criminals. Houses of detention should be erected for them where they can be kept under an indeterminate sentence and given an opportunity to labor for their own support while under guardianship. In some men of a similar character the moral sense becomes cultivated and the will strengthened by religious impressions. With many, in fact, the only agency which seems capable of permanently reforming them is that radical religious change known as conversion, which substitutes new aims, desires and aspirations, and supplies a motive for right doing far above and beyond the sensual standard of living which these individuals formerly had. Many natures, however, are incapable of such regeneration. It seems to belong largely to those who have been religiously educated and carefully trained in childhood. In Watson's case I never could detect any religious tendency or susceptibility, and it is to be feared that he will never come under such regenerating influences. I take it for granted then that there is little or no prospect of his permanent restoration. He ought, nevertheless, to be protected from himself by being put under constant guardianship and have regular compulsory work. Is he an invalid—a sufferer from the so-called disease of inebriety?

This is certainly not self-evident. There are, in fact, many arguments against this view. Is he a criminal and merely vicious? The arguments against this view are equally strong. If vicious and criminal, his only criminality seems to be in the matter of drink. In the eyes of the law and of society he ought rather to be regarded as an irresponsible imbecile to be sheltered and cared for, and at the same time compelled to support himself by labor. For such individuals work-houses should be erected and labor provided. Inebriates should be sent to such establishments, under an indeterminate sentence, and only discharged when it becomes apparent that a restoration of will-power and mental integrity has been effected. Inebriety in this manner should be made a serious matter. The inebriate has too long been regarded a victim of others. He ought rather to be dealt with on his own demerits and treated as an enemy to himself and to society.

